

Color Calif. schools green

Conference highlights eco-friendly concepts

By Caroline An, Staff Writer

[Whittier Daily News](#)

Photo Gallery: [Green California](#)

PASADENA - Green went to school Wednesday.

At a first-of-its-kind, two-day summit focusing on ways to turn the state's nearly 1,000 public schools into green, self-sustainable campuses, hundreds of educators and interested parties looked at several recent innovations - including file folders and post-it notes made from soy-based products.

There was even a jungle gym made entirely of plastic milk containers.

Pointing to those and other, more traditional efforts, such as recycling cans, bottles and plastics and installing energy-efficient lighting, organizers of the Green California Schools summit said they hope the event provides a forum for sharing the best green practices.

They also hope to steer educators toward possible funding sources that will allow them to "green" their schools.

The conference, being held at the Pasadena Convention Center, is covering a range of issues, including how schools can save money by implementing green technology and how green practices can improve student health.

More than 200 exhibitors, 75 educational presentations and dozens of workshops will have been presented by the conference's finale later today.

Workshops range from how to get a green school built to examining ways to improve school lunches.

Turning schools into green zones means "students are healthier and they are learning in a healthier environment," said Rosario Marin, who serves in Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's cabinet as secretary of the State and Consumer Services Agency.

Environmentally friendly school buildings are more cost-effective, summit experts said.

According to the U.S. Green Building Council, green schools save an average of \$100,000 per year in energy costs. A school site's lifetime is usually 42 years, bringing potential savings to \$4.2 million, council officials said.

One eco-friendly idea that got support from many at the summit is the concept of "grid-neutrality," in which schools generate all the energy they need, then put any excess energy back into the power grid, said David Thorman, the state architect.

It's a concept he is committed to achieving, Thorman said.

The conference's opening remarks came from various state officials and environmental advocates, including actor Ed Begley Jr., who has made energy conservation his life's passion, and David E. Long, the state's secretary of education.

While global climate change, ocean pollution and groundwater contamination remain daunting problems, Begley said he "was filled with hope" from the growing support for the green movement.

"We are heading in the right direction," he said.

caroline.an@sgvn.com

(626) 578-6300, Ext. 4494

www.insidesocal.com/schools